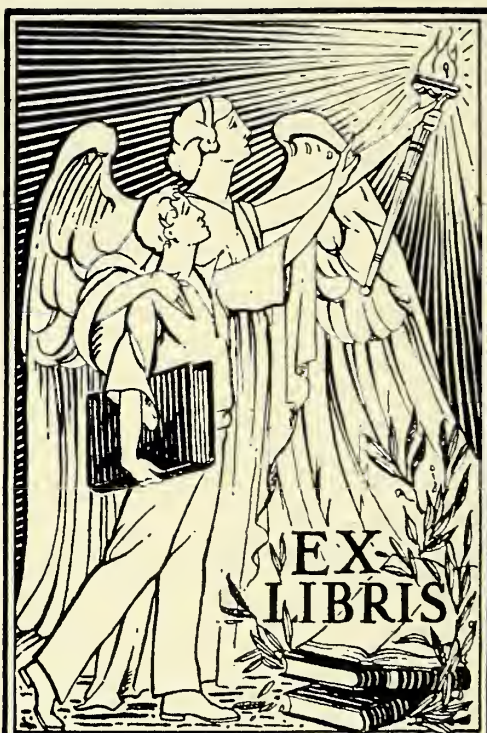


BLIND WELFARE AFTER THE WAR

N.I.B. Bulletin 15



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Blind Welfare After the War

REPORT of a Committee appointed by the Executive Council of the National Institute for the Blind on the proposals made by Sir William Beveridge on "Social Insurance and Allied Services", and by the Inter-Departmental Committee on "The Rehabilitation and Resettlement of Disabled Persons"—The Tomlinson Report—in relation to Blind Welfare.

1. The Bearing of the Reports on Blind Welfare

Both of the Reports which have been referred to us make proposals which would profoundly modify the structure of Blind Welfare. The nature of the Beveridge proposals has been made widely known by public discussion. The Tomlinson Report has attracted little public attention, although one of its main proposals involves a degree of virtual compulsion of industry which goes beyond anything which industrialists have in the past shown themselves willing to accept. On the other hand, its potential importance to the blind and to other classes of handicapped persons who desire, despite their handicap, to make a full contribution to the economic life of the community, is great, and we approach its consideration with a keen desire to see the main principles of both Reports adopted by Parliament.

It should be observed that both the Beveridge and Tomlinson Committees, apart from their Chairmen, consisted of Civil Servants; and that Parliament, which has discussed the former's Report, has not yet expressed even a tentative view on the latter's. It should be noted also that the Tomlinson Report was, for the most part, written before the Beveridge plan was published, and that the Committee had to content themselves with a cursory reference to it, saying that their own proposals did not "conflict in aim or principles with those advocated by Sir William Beveridge"; they hoped therefore, that the consideration of their Report would not be deferred for a decision on the future scheme of social insurance, while recognizing that the Beveridge proposals with regard to maintenance during incapacity through disablement, to special provision for the victims of industrial accidents and disease, and to the linking of benefit payment with vocational training, would need to be adjusted to their own recommendations under both heads. They admit also that the establishment of a separate Ministry of Social Security would compel a re-examination of their own recommendations for the administration of their scheme of rehabilitation and resettlement.

2. The Report of the Tomlinson Committee

The Tomlinson Committee was appointed "to make proposals for introduction at the earliest possible date of a scheme for the rehabilitation and training for employment of disabled persons not provided for by the Interim Scheme," already introduced by the Ministry of Labour; "to consider and make recommendations on machinery and finance for

- (i) the rehabilitation and training of, and
- (ii) securing satisfactory employment for disabled persons of all categories."

The Committee interpreted "disabled persons" as including the blind and they suggest (para. 82) an interim definition of disablement, for the purposes of the Act of Parliament in the following terms:

"A disabled person is a person who, on account of injury or disease of a character which is likely to last for more than six months, or on account of congenital deformity, is substantially handicapped in obtaining or keeping employment of a kind generally suited to his age, previous experience, and qualifications."

Their Report (para. 71 (b)) emphasizes that an adequate scheme must provide not only for physical injury but for conditions resulting from disease or congenital deformity and it adds the important consideration that "However far the principle of equality of opportunity is carried, natural qualities such as brains, manual dexterity, physique, appearance, character and personality" must always be important factors of employability. Its general conclusion is that the voluntary method, as applied in the King's Roll Scheme after the last war, will not suffice, and that some measure of statutory obligation will be required. At the same time, it insists that there is a great range of occupations within reach of the majority of disabled people.

3. The Four Main Recommendations

Four distinct proposals result from the Committee's consideration of the problem thus defined. They are:

- (a) The creation of a *register* of persons handicapped by disablement.
- (b) The introduction of a *quota* of disabled persons and the imposition upon employers who do not satisfy the quota of a restriction on the engagement of workers.
- (c) The *scheduling of certain occupations* for the benefit of disabled persons.

(d) The assistance by Grant of Voluntary Undertakings providing *facilities for employment* for the severely disabled, and the establish-

ment of other special centres for such employment, to be administered by a Public Corporation grant-aided by the Exchequer and enjoying preference in public contracts.

Specific reference is made to the blind here and there throughout the Report. The paragraphs, 93-98, which refer solely to the blind, mainly indicate the need for special provision for them. None the less, the Report as a whole is intended to apply to the blind as one class of the disabled persons under consideration. The specific references are designed mainly to get over the difficulty that the blind (being the only class of handicapped persons for whose welfare *ad hoc* legislation now exists) are already provided with some of the facilities recommended for the disabled generally, but by means inconsistent with the Committee's general scheme. It is to be observed that the Report mainly envisages manual occupations in factories, though one paragraph (101) is devoted to the employment of disabled persons on their own account, and that, in dealing with training, it touches on training for the professions and the higher grades of technical and administrative employment, and training for semi-professional technical, executive, and clerical occupations of lower grade than professional. It has, in fact, to be read with an eye both to the specific and generic references to the blind.

4. Application to the Blind

To avert the confusion which might well arise from the blind being partly excluded and partly included in the general plan, it seems advisable to summarize first the proposals specifically made by the Committee with regard to the blind, and then the implications of their being regarded as a group of disabled persons.

I. *Specific Proposals*

(a) A more clearly defined duty than exists at present should be imposed on the Blind Persons Act Authorities in relation to the provision of employment for the blind; the Authority "should be regarded as the medium through which sheltered employment should be provided" and "the Departments concerned" (presumably the Ministry of Labour and National Service and the Ministry of Health) "should work out a scheme for the amendment of the Blind Persons Acts and for co-ordinating the employment of the blind with the Committee's general proposal for sheltered employment" (para. 98).

(b) The general duty of Local Education Authorities in the matter of the education and training of blind persons "should be converted

into a specific obligation to provide or to secure the provision of vocational training for all blind persons for whom such provision is required and is not otherwise obtainable."

It should also be noted that the Committee considered whether the scope of the Blind Persons Acts should be extended so as to cover the partially sighted, but decided not to recommend that it should, as the needs of the partially sighted "would be sufficiently met by the existing powers of Local Education Authorities in respect of training and by the general proposals of the Report in respect both of ordinary and sheltered employment." They found also that the vocational training at present provided by the Ministry of Labour and National Service is not in present conditions suitable for blind persons.

II. *Implications*

The consequences of including the blind among disabled persons are, in relation to the Committee's four main proposals (see section 3):

(a) *Registration*. Blind persons would be eligible for enrolment on the Register of persons available for employment in open industry. This—the Tomlinson—Register, must be kept distinct from the Register of the Blind, which is intended to be a complete record of persons who are certified as blind within the meaning of the Act.

(b) *The Quota*. Blind persons accepted for the Tomlinson Register would rank for inclusion in the quota.

(c) *Scheduled Occupations*. Blind persons would be eligible for employment in the scheduled occupations.

(d) Although it is proposed (I (a) above) that the Blind Persons Acts Authorities would continue to be responsible for the provision of sheltered employment for the blind, but with more clearly defined duties in that matter, blind persons would not be excluded from other sheltered Workshops conducted by voluntary undertakings or directly managed by the proposed Public Corporation.

5. **Basis of Policy**

The main principles of rehabilitation and resettlement laid down in the Tomlinson Committee's Report command our fullest assent. They are in full accord with the fundamental principle of blind welfare, namely, that handicapped persons should be assured not only of financial support but of occupation under conditions which approximate as nearly as possible to the normal. It is of great value to have this principle so authoritatively restated, and much of what is said in the Report on the medical and psychological aspects of rehabilitation, and of training for industry, is of outstanding value and importance to the

social service of the handicapped. We also endorse with gratification the Report's statement that the aim of a resettlement policy, designed "to serve the interest of the country as well as of the disabled citizen," is that "he should get back to suitable employment as soon as possible—not to *any* employment but to the most skilled work of which he is capable."

Any criticisms we express or imply in the following Sections of our Report arise mainly from our impression that Mr Tomlinson and his advisers thought too readily that the blind are a race apart from other men, whereas the true interests of the blind are best served by bringing them as fully as possible into the main stream of national life. The inconsistencies to which we have already referred seem to spring from a too tender regard for existing arrangements under the Blind Persons Acts. Our view is that the blind would gain rather than lose by being brought as fully as possible into the proposed general system for the employment of the disabled. That view we hope will be justified in the following Sections, which examine the bearing of each of the Tomlinson proposals in turn on the present machinery for the benefit of the employable blind and on the interests, as we see them, of the blind persons concerned.

6. The Register

The Register would be maintained at Employment Exchanges throughout the country, and would be built up on voluntary applications for enrolment by persons coming within the definition of disabled, desiring to work, and in the opinion of the Committee capable of effective employment.

Local Resettlement Committees, including medical experts, representatives of employers and work people, and others who have specialized knowledge of the problems of disablement, would be set up by the Ministry of Labour and National Service, to advise the Exchanges on the solution of the problem in their areas, and to assist in individual cases. Classification as employable or unemployable by qualified people able to take a wide view of industry and of employability in relation to jobs of all grades, is much to be preferred to the present arrangement, by which a local authority or its agent, not constituted for industrial purposes, classifies persons who apply for assistance under the Blind Persons Acts, as employable or unemployable in general terms. The criterion at present used is too often simply fitness for employment in a workshop for the blind or Home Industries scheme. The judgment of a Local Resettlement Committee would be

more practical because it would be based on wider and more accurate industrial knowledge.

The relationship between the responsible local authority or its agent and the Local Resettlement Committee should present no difficulty. The former would furnish the latter with the names of all the blind persons in the area of employable age. The Beveridge proposal, that Unemployment and Disablement Benefit should be conditional on the applicant taking reasonable steps to secure employment or re-training, would assist both the local authority and the Committee to secure attendance for interview of all possibly employable blind persons, and the Ministry of Social Security would no doubt require a competent verdict on employability before granting Benefit. In any case, the blind should not be allowed to lose the advantages of the new scheme or to evade its obligations simply because, through ignorance or inertia, they neglect to register.

7. Employment under Quota in Open Industry

Paragraph 98 of the Report anticipates that many, if not the majority, of the employable blind "will continue to need sheltered employment." It is not obvious, in the light of the general views expressed by the Committee, and of our own experience, why this expectation should be entertained.¹ Some established interests in Blind Welfare will no doubt be reluctant to break up the conventional sequence of school, training establishment, and workshop; and, so long as progression from an Elementary classroom to a traditional workshop-craft is regarded as the normal course for blind children, the question of entry to open industry will be of interest mainly to blind persons who lose effective sight after early adolescence. But that kind of industrial predestination of blind children is one of the outstanding faults in Blind Welfare which we wish to remedy, and we think that in this matter the view of the Tomlinson Committee is mistaken.

On the other hand, those who will be responsible for the conduct of resettlement policy will need experienced guidance on the intricacies of blind employability. They will probably start under the mistaken impression that employability is correlated with the degree of blindness. To correct that tendency and to help them in their judgments

¹ To illustrate our contention that the blind should prove no less employable than persons suffering from other handicaps, the facts may be cited that the Ford Company in the U.S.A. voluntarily employ 1,200 blind and partially sighted workers, and, under the Disability Law which was put into operation in Germany after the last War, obliging employers to engage disabled labour up to 2 per cent of their total staff, Messrs Siemens-Schuckert had on their pay roll in 1930 309 blind employees, a figure which by itself was more than 2 per cent of the total of the employees.

on blind applicants, Local Resettlement Committees should be advised by people who know the capacity of the blind and the wide range of processes which even totally blind persons can perform. Such advice would safeguard both the interests of the blind and the expenditure of public funds. We have no doubt that the Ministry of Labour and National Service will recognize the need for expert advice in relation to blindness—and, though that is not strictly our concern, to other forms of disablement.

The practical experience already gained by the blind, both in sheltered employment and in ordinary industry, should stand them in good stead when they face new opportunities after the war. The war has enabled us to prove in practice what we already knew—although we had previously been unable to impress the majority of employers, employment exchange staff, trade unions and the general public with its truth—namely, that there are hundreds of processes in ordinary industry in which the blind are highly employable.

On the other hand, recent experience has emphasized the need for careful selection and effective after-care. The element of compulsion in the Tomlinson Plan will perhaps make the cultivation of good-will towards blind employees less important than it now is. But it will always be important. Employers, personnel managers, foremen and even fellow-workers have to be conciliated, or convinced, in favour of the unknown and the untried. Advice has sometimes to be given on the adaptation of machines or practical details of regular routine. Some blind workers have to be encouraged or advised on difficulties they find confronting them in their place of work. Some have to be found guides. Generally, the maintenance of personal touch after placement is as important as careful pre-selection. The furnishing of advice, and the provision of after-care, is clearly a function of the Blind Welfare Agency, public or voluntary, of the area. The blind employee *qua* employee will be the charge of the Ministry of Labour and National Service. *Qua* blind person he will still be the charge of Blind Welfare. Continued contact will be essential so that his needs as a blind person may be fully met, whether in or out of employment. The National Institute for the Blind has found it necessary to appoint a Placement Officer to visit factories, where blind employees are holding war-time engagements. But the range of one such officer is necessarily limited, and we think that the local Blind Welfare Authority or Agency will need to employ an officer who is competent to act in that capacity wherever blind persons are employed in open industry.

It is vitally important to constructive work for the blind that the advance made in war-time should not be lost in the return to peace-

time economy. The Tomlinson proposals will be of particular value at the time of transition; as a means of consolidating our war-time gains they will be almost a gift from the gods. But the Ministry of Labour and National Service have a right to expect the help of Blind Welfare in overcoming any difficulties which arise from the factor of blindness, and Blind Welfare will have to organize itself to co-operate effectively with the Employment Exchanges and the local Resettlement Committees if it is to enjoy the full benefits of the new industrial situation.

An important incidental result of the quota system would be its effect on employers who need to be persuaded that, if one of their employees loses his sight, he can again be employed in the concern in his previous or some other capacity.

8. Employment on Own Account

Paragraph 101 is of particular interest to us because the example of the blind is quoted in it to illustrate the Committee's view that "a certain number of disabled persons" will wish to set up for themselves in some business or occupation. The phrasing of the recommendations on this point, however, is curious: it takes pains to emphasize that the wish of the persons concerned will be "for reasons arising directly out of disablement, and not as a matter of personal preference for independent as against contractual occupation," and that "for such persons the conduct of a small business in or near their homes may well prove to be the only method by which they can earn a livelihood." The conclusion reached is that much is to be said for the institution of special measures where employment on own account "constitutes the most satisfactory form of resettlement," and that such proposals would require further examination in the plans for the immediate post-war period.

This, though satisfactory so far as it goes, does not take us very far, and we would emphasize that the establishment of blind persons in small businesses—which, as the Report says, is an activity which makes for independence, and helps to reduce the burden on the ordinary blind industries—is justified by reasons of personal preference as well as by reasons arising out of blindness. Employment as a wage earner is not the ideal way of life for every one, and we reject any suggestion that a disabled person should not have as much freedom of choice as persons who are under no physical handicap. In so far as employment on own account, in any capacity from, say, a tea-agency to free-lance journalism or authorship, offers a blind person a greater chance of happiness and usefulness than employment for wages, we wish to see opportunity offered and practical encouragement given. If, in any post-war plan, provision is made for assisting resettlement on

own account, it would presumably, in the case of blind persons, be administered through the Local Authorities and Agencies for Blind Welfare.

9. Employment in Scheduled Occupations

The proposals with regard to scheduled occupations are contained in Paragraphs 78-81 of the Report. They are based on the statement that:

"There is a considerable group of occupations which by their nature and their limited demand on physical and mental ability are particularly suitable to certain categories of disablement. The most obvious examples of such occupations are lift operators, messengers, and attendants of various kinds. The Committee recommend that provision should be made in the Act to prohibit, except under licence, the engagement for work in such occupations of persons who have not been accepted for the Register."

The method advocated for this purpose is that the Ministry of Labour and National Service should be given power to prescribe a list of such occupations, and to devolve upon the Local Committees detailed administration, including the imposition of sanctions on employers who fail to reserve such occupations for disabled persons. It is emphasized that the scheduling of occupations is designed only for persons who are not particularly suited to occupations of a higher grade. Disabled persons so employed would not be counted for the purpose of the quota.

The general idea of scheduling for the benefit of disabled persons certain occupations within their capacity seems to us fair and reasonable. Unfortunately, the Report has the effect of restricting them to those, naturally poorly paid and poorly considered, which require *limited* physical and mental ability. The case for the employment of the blind is not that they can do only low grade work; but that, though they are handicapped by lack of vision, they can do jobs of all grades (which does not, of course, mean all jobs of any grade) according to their varying degrees of physical and mental ability. This distinction is of vital importance. None of the jobs specified in the Report as typical occupations for scheduling are suitable for the blind. On the other hand, there is a number of occupations of good standing in which blind persons of suitable type can render valuable service. We would like to see the idea of the Schedule extended so as to cover a wider range of industrial occupations, such as telephony (manual boards), and subsidiary services, such as kiosk and canteen management; and extended even further so as to bring into the picture of national provision for disabled citizens such occupations as piano-

tuning and massage which, so far from being work which can be performed with limited ability, is skilled work in which the blind fully hold their own with sighted people. It is possible that the quota method would be more effective than that of scheduling in creating openings for *blind persons with special ability*—for so we would describe the people we have in mind. That is for consideration. The point we have to make is that in one way or another blind persons who have capacity for certain occupations and have received suitable training should, in accordance with the guiding principles of policy arrived at by the Tomlinson Committee (Section 5 above), have a beneficial preference. The Ministry of Labour and National Service has itself in the last year set an admirable example in employing blind telephonists, with promise of permanence, in its own offices, and we suggest that its example should be followed by other Government Departments, Public Corporations, Local Government bodies, and Hospitals, which could most usefully employ not only blind telephonists but blind shorthand writers and executive officers of various grades. It seems to us an indefensible anomaly that Local Authorities, which are responsible for the education, training, and welfare of the blind, should not as a whole¹ set a better example in this matter to industry and commerce.

10. Sheltered Workshops

The references made in the Tomlinson Report to sheltered workshops, and the recommendations made with regard to them, are naturally of great interest to us, as the employees at present engaged in workshops for the blind and Home Workers Schemes constitute two-thirds of the total of 9,000 employed blind. The Tomlinson Report is emphatic in its view that sheltered employment “must be limited to that small group of disabled persons who cannot hold their own on level terms and under competitive conditions.” (para. 9) “No good purpose would be served” it says (para. 86) “by attempting to force employers to engage for ordinary employment disabled persons who are capable only of employment under sheltered conditions.” It proposes therefore to subsidize existing voluntary undertakings providing sheltered employment for persons “whose disablement is of so serious and difficult a character as to prevent, either permanently, or for a substantial period, employment under ordinary conditions”; and further to encourage an increase in the number of such undertakings, and to set up, in order to complete the required provision, a system of special

¹ We emphasize “as a whole”; several Local Authorities, and a few Government Departments, already set an example; but the total of blind people employed in public service is still deplorably low.

centres under Government auspices. Its opinion already referred to (section 7 above) that the whole, or even the majority, of the employable blind would continue to be employed in sheltered workshops has to be examined in this setting.

There is in these references a strong flavour of the tendency to regard the blind as a class apart, on which we have commented in section 5 above. We emphatically dissent from the implication that the blind as such "cannot hold their own . . . on level terms and under competitive conditions, and must for that reason continue to be employed mainly in sheltered workshops." On the other hand we warmly welcome the recommendation (para. 98) that sheltered employment for the blind should be co-ordinated with the general proposals for sheltered employment, and that the meaning of "sheltered" should be expanded by measures which would give new significance to the term. Those measures (which the Committee justify by considerations of justice to the handicapped and also by the saving to national funds in respect of unemployment and other maintenance expenditure which would result) are that the employment should be given through the production of articles which are in regular demand for Government or other public purposes and lend themselves to small scale manufacturing processes, and that the workshops should be given, so far as is necessary for the optimum of employment, a virtual monopoly of their supply.

We do not understand how workshops for the blind could be co-ordinated with other sheltered workshops without becoming part of the whole system. Other workshops would produce articles similar to or identical with those which now constitute the staple of workshops for the blind production. Only absorption into the general system would effectively prevent undesirable competition and ensure a fair share of public contracts for workshops of all types. Workshops for the blind need to expand the number of crafts they practise, and they would expect to obtain orders for the commodities which they now produce—mainly basketry, mats, mattresses, brushes, woven goods and knitwear—and for other commodities in which sheltered workshops generally would have a preference. Without some good practical reason for the distinction involved, the maintenance of two systems of supply for such goods would be absurd. Moreover, it is strongly felt in Blind Welfare that the co-employment of blind workers with sighted workers of the same craft offers great possibilities of extending the number of workshop trades and of improving workshop production. Such co-employment would obviously not be practicable unless blind and sighted workers belonged to the same productive system.

The case for bringing workshops for the blind under the direction of the proposed Public Corporation seems to us economically and administratively sound, and to be to the manifest advantage not only of the blind but of other handicapped workshop employees, and of the public consumers who, in return for preferential orders, would expect prompt and reliable service. The only argument for a dual system seems to lie in the reluctance of the Tomlinson Committee to split the responsibility of Local Authorities for blind welfare, or to question the implication of the Blind Persons Acts that employment of able-bodied, but handicapped, people, is an integral part of "welfare."

11. Local Authorities' Responsibility for Employment

When responsibility for Blind Welfare was imposed on Local Authorities in 1920, there was no precedent to guide Parliament on the question of the employment of blind people. Up to that date all provision for disablement had been made by voluntary organizations. The Blind Persons Act, 1920, treated blindness primarily as a cause of destitution. Parliament found in the group of blind persons a certain number who were employed and, without giving much consideration to the economic and psychological factors which the Tomlinson Committee has now emphasized, it included employment in the sum total of responsibility for the blind. The question whether Local Authorities, with wide public health and multifarious other functions were or are the right Authorities for providing employment, might have been solved differently if there had existed any alternative system in which workshops for the blind and home workers schemes could have been incorporated. The Tomlinson system is clearly such an alternative, and the fact that it was not in existence in 1920 does not affect the question whether it, rather than the general Local Government system, is the right Authority for the employment of disabled people.

The Tomlinson proposals in fact fall logically into their place in the recent evolution of British social service. The first Blind Persons Act was a preliminary step, in favour of the blind only, towards breaking up the Poor Law. Its transfer of responsibility for preventing destitution from the Poor Law to County Councils and County Borough Councils anticipated the larger transference made in 1929. The situation thus created has an interesting analogy in the early history of the Poor Law, when the problem of poverty was confused with the quite different problem of unemployment. The development of the Employment Exchanges and the Unemployment Assistance Board has removed that more general anomaly, and it is logical that, when a comprehensive resettlement scheme for all the disabled is contemplated, the opport-

unity should be seized of dissociating the employment of the blind from the care of the unemployable.

The Local Authorities have been generous in their attitude to all branches of Blind Welfare, including employment. They have paid Augmentation of Wages, made grants to cover trading losses and other costs of management, and adopted scales of minimum wages. In some cases they have built and equipped convenient and spacious workshops. But in the matter of employment generosity is not enough. Under Local Authority responsibility, workshops for the blind have, in general, lost economic character. While costs have increased, economic wages have declined. Augmentation payments and grants of various kinds have tended to become the main element in the total remuneration. Trading losses have increased as emphasis on earning real wages has become weaker.

Responsibility for the employment of the blind has in fact put the Local Authorities concerned in an embarrassing position in which they may be subject to political pressure and uninstructed public opinion. Whatever their wishes in the matter, they may not be able to observe the vital principle of welfare, forcibly re-stated by the Tomlinson Committee, that the purpose of a workshop is, so far as possible, to enable a disabled person to earn a livelihood on his merits as a worker in normal competition with his fellows.

The figures of employed blind, over a period of years, so far as they are comparable, suggest that so far from there being an increase in the number of employed owing to more effective ascertaining and registration, there has been a decrease. At 31st March 1925, the total number of employed blind was 8,840; at 31st March 1941 it was 7,946. Whatever allowance is made for changes in the definition employed, the comparison is disquieting when regard is had to the very large number of adults in the prime of life who were added to the register in that period, and to the output of the schools and training establishments.

These facts can be stated without in any way disparaging the members of Local Government bodies or their officials. They have done their best in a difficult situation; the responsibility for employing the blind imposed on them by the Blind Persons Act was unique. Employment of handicapped persons is not a proper task for Local Government; it needs to be handled by a body or bodies of an industrial character. The Tomlinson Public Corporation would have that character.

A further point in favour of bringing workshops for the blind into the Tomlinson scheme arises from the apparently insoluble difficulties of local chargeability which have arisen under the present system from the fact that the unit-areas for employment are not co-terminous with

Local Government areas. Many counties and county boroughs have no workshops for the blind within their boundaries; those which have (by reason mainly of historical accidents of local benevolence), have to meet the needs of employable blind people living in other areas as well as those in their own. They not unnaturally object to admitting outsiders who may become a charge on their own rates. Efforts to adjust the question of cost involved have been made by Parliament, the Ministry of Health, and the national associations of local government bodies; but each shift one way has brought difficulty at the other end of the process. Elaborate negotiations have now to be conducted between one Local Authority and another for the settlement of every case which arises; failure to reach agreement has resulted in blind persons in certain areas being virtually excluded from workshop employment, and in indefensible inequality of opportunity for blind persons generally.

12. Home Workers' Schemes

Little reference is made in the Report to home workers' schemes for disabled persons. Such schemes play an important part in blind welfare, and should not be regarded simply as means of employing blind people who are not good enough for the workshops. Under skilled management they provide an adequate livelihood for a number of trained blind people, who prefer the position of quasi-independence which home employment gives them to the probably larger remuneration they would get as wage earners in a factory. A great deal of experience has now been accumulated on the possibilities of home employment and on the technique of the management of schemes for providing it. They should share in the advantages of being 'sheltered' in the expanded sense given to that term by the Tomlinson recommendations. We would emphasize the importance of their being recognized as an integral part of the employment system to be directed by the proposed Public Corporation.

13. Workshops for the Blind and the Public Corporation

The general effect of the new policy would, as we see it, be to increase the number of employed blind, to direct the majority of physically and temperamentally competent young blind people towards employment in open industry, and to reserve sheltered workshops giving employment to the blind (by themselves or jointly with people suffering from other forms of disablement) for blind persons who, for physical, temperamental, or other reasons, would not be accepted as fully employable. As a consequence the level of individual efficiency in the workshops may be lowered. On the other hand the general economic level of the workshops might be raised by efficient management

under the general direction of the Public Corporation enjoying the advantages of a sheltered market. The intermixture of blind and sighted workers may also be a compensating factor. Much would have to be learned by way of experimentation. One of the advantages of unified direction would be that the lessons learned from an experiment in one area could be readily applied elsewhere. For the moment we would emphasize only the point that, if the effect of the new policy is to reduce the number of workshop employees, there should be a reduction in the number of establishments rather than in the average number of employees per workshop. The smallness of the industrial unit has always been a disadvantage to workshops for the blind, and it would be a misfortune if that difficulty were now to be aggravated.

In practice it is not likely that the workshops will be solely an expedient for the less rather than the more employable workers. Employment in a workshop, where available, must to some extent be an open option for competent workers who, for any reason, prefer a workshop craft to factory employment under the quota. The level of wages obtainable will in most cases be the decisive factor, and the dissent we have already expressed from the Committee's view that the majority of blind people would still be employed in sheltered workshops is primarily directed against an assumption which might prejudice future policy.

In speaking for the blind we argue for the largest possible freedom of choice for individuals, according to inclination, and economic inducement, and at the same time for the highest obtainable efficiency in the direction and management of sheltered workshops. The proposed Public Corporation could do invaluable work for disabled persons, who are moderately employable, under more favourable conditions than those which Local Authorities have had to deal with in discharging their responsibilities for employment under the Blind Persons Acts. Preference in the allocation of public contracts, given with frank recognition that the public would have to pay more for the products of sheltered workshops than it would pay for goods supplied under open competition, would keep the Public Corporation under a measure of public criticism. It would have to satisfy Parliament that the workshops, while paying reasonable wages to the workers, are producing as cheaply as possible. That should stimulate efficiency. We are inclined to think, however, that the Corporation, guided by the experience of workshops for the blind, would have to apply more widely the principle¹ of augmentation of wages, on a scale calculated

¹See Section 18 below for a possible application of the principle under the Social Security Plan.

to compensate the handicap of each worker, and we make further reference to this point in a later section dealing with Sir William Beveridge's proposals. Any kind of monopoly, charging the public obviously uneconomic prices, would rouse strong objection. Augmentation, properly controlled, would allow prices to be fixed on an actual cost basis which would exclude payments of a compensatory character from wage-cost.

14. The Tomlinson Proposals with regard to Training

Training, though it precedes employment, must be conditioned by the occupational purpose it serves. We approach the Tomlinson proposals with regard to training in the light of what has been said above on the economic environment which their employment proposals would create.

The Report deals with training of the disabled in general in Paragraphs 50-58, and with the training of the blind in Paragraph 94. Its general proposals state specifically that "the need for vocational training is not only for those who have recently left hospital but also for persons whose disability dates from previous years—in some cases from birth or childhood." They envisage:

- (a) Training for the professions and higher grade work.
- (b) Training for semi-professional and intermediate grade work.
- (c) Training in industry, i.e. manual occupations;

and they propose for each of these three branches of training:—

(a) That the plans now being made for training demobilized persons for high grade occupations should be extended to cover persons disabled otherwise than by war service.

(b) That training courses for intermediate grade occupations should be provided by the Ministry of Labour as part of its general scheme of training, in co-operation, as necessary, with the Educational Department.

(c) That for manual occupations, the scheme of vocational training now administered by the Ministry of Labour should be adapted and extended to meet those requirements in respect of all persons of and above the age of 16, juveniles under 16 being the responsibility of the Education Departments.

On the other hand the proposals with regard to the blind are that the existing duty of Local Education Authorities should be converted into a specific obligation to provide, or to secure the provision of, vocational training for all blind persons for whom such provision is required and not otherwise obtainable. It is added that the vocational training of blind now provided by the Ministry of Labour and National

Service is "not at present suitable for blind persons, though it may be possible to take a different view when the opportunities for employment have been more clearly defined."

Reference has also to be made to para. 42-46 of the Report which deals with "reconditioning as part of post-hospital rehabilitation," the last stage of which is industrial training. Reconditioning means the provision required to assist the mental and physical restoration of persons on discharge from hospital, who are not fit to go immediately to full employment or to a full-time course of vocational training. Its first requirement is stated to be the establishment of special centres with functions identical with those of the N.I.B. Homes of Recovery and St Dunstan's. The Ministry of Labour intends to establish such a centre as soon as possible, in order to give it practical experience. It suggests further that in some cases light employment may be the most suitable method of re-conditioning. Generally, the Report recommends that the responsibility of a re-conditioning service for adults should rest with the Ministry of Labour, and that persons in residence at a re-conditioning centre should receive a maintenance allowance similar to that to be paid while under vocational training, i.e. paid at a uniform rate irrespective of the wages payable in the occupation for which training is being given.

Finally, attention has to be drawn to the following points in the recommendations:

(i) "Vocational Training" means training for employment under ordinary conditions, not for sheltered employment.

No proposal is made on training for sheltered employment. The fact that craft training may take 4-5 years, is possibly one of the reasons why the vocational training of the blind is left in the hands of the Local Education Authorities. If training for sheltered workshops generally is to be a function of the Local Education Authorities, the question of the relationship between the Local Education Authorities and the Public Corporation to be set up by the Ministry of Labour and National Service, will require careful adjustment.

(ii) The needs of the partially sighted are considered in para. 95, and the Committee express the view that "they will be sufficiently met by the existing powers of Local Education Authorities in respect of training and by the proposals in respect both of ordinary and sheltered employment recommended in this Report."

What the "powers of Local Education Authorities" are in respect of the training of the partially sighted is obscure, but it is clear that partially sighted people are intended to be eligible for quota employment in ordinary industry and for the scheduled occupations. Their inclu-

sion in sheltered workshop employment seems to contradict the principle laid down in para. 90 that such workshops are for those whose disablement is of so serious a character as to prevent employment under ordinary conditions.

It is probably fair to find the explanations of these discrepancies in para. 55, which emphasizes the positive industrial character of the existing Government Training Centres and deprecates any introduction of a medical or therapeutic flavour. The Ministry of Labour and National Service attaches great importance to reproducing in a Training Centre "the ordinary working conditions of industrial employment. The trainee should be physically able to take the full course and to follow successfully the occupation in which he has been trained."

15. Comments on Training Proposals

We are entirely in agreement with the Committee's strongly held and reiterated view that the training of adults should be of an industrial character, so that the trainees should acquire not only dexterity and skill, but also habits of regularity and productive use of time. A trainee is not trained until he is able and willing to work a normal working week. It is true that an investigation of the existing Ministry of Labour's Training Centres by the National Institute for the Blind in conjunction with the Ministry of Labour, led to the conclusion that they are not at present suitable for blind persons and we appreciate the Committee's statements that wider experience (and no doubt changing conditions) might enable a different view to be taken of the utility of such Centres to the blind.

We would like to know more, however, of what the Committee had in mind for training in sheltered employment. In so far as sheltered employment would be for such crafts as have long been practised in workshops for the blind, there would have to be training establishments providing for disabled persons generally the prolonged training necessary for the acquisition of skill and adaptability, and we have no reason to think that blinded adults could not be trained in them side by side with trainees otherwise handicapped. If such establishments were controlled directly or indirectly by the Ministry of Labour, there should be a close relationship between it and the education authorities, so that their trainees might have opportunities of other education (for the life of man is more than wage earning), and blinded persons under training in particular might gain progressive proficiency in Braille and other arts of the blind. On the whole we think that training for all sheltered employment should be a responsibility of the Education Authorities.

The facilities for training blind children and adolescents have now

to be considered in relation to the White Paper proposals for the reconstruction of the whole education system. That policy should result in prospective non-manual workers being sorted out at a comparatively early age. At about the age of 11 children suited for Grammar school and technical types of secondary education will go on to Worcester College, Chorleywood College, and the Royal Normal College, and the rest will complete their education up to 16 years of age in remodelled Modern Secondary schools. Some of the Modern School children would aim at employment in open industry, some at workshop employment and some at employment on own account or other occupations. The Modern School education would not be technical or unduly specialized, but it should, on the other hand, have an occupational bias. School leavers at 16 would move to a vocational training centre, whether for open industry or for sheltered employment, and it should be contemplated that, at that age, they should be brought into contact with the local Resettlement Committee which, on the basis of school reports, would advise on careers and arrange a suitable form of vocational training for each adolescent. Their general education would be continued either in the Training Centre or, preferably, in the Young People's Colleges to be established for part-time education up to the age of 18.

Where blindness is incurred after school age the first task must be rehabilitation on Home of Recovery lines. Interviewing by the local Resettlement Committee and subsequent arrangements for vocational training would take place on the completion of the rehabilitation stage, though we would again emphasize the importance of continuing education in Braille etc. throughout the technical training period. As so much responsibility will be thrown on them, it is evident that the local Resettlement Committees should be fully aware of the capabilities of blind persons and of the opportunities open to them. In this connection we would emphasize the importance of the Tomlinson Committee's plan for regional and national co-ordination so that the resettlement committees should if necessary be able to find work, or provide training, for blind applicants in areas other than those for which they are immediately responsible.

16. Relationship of Tomlinson and Beveridge Proposals

Like the Tomlinson Committee's Report, the Beveridge Plan aims at integrating blind welfare into a national system designed to provide comprehensively for needs arising from similar economic disadvantage, rather than for special groups of distinctively handicapped persons. Both Reports are emphatic in the assertion of this general principle. Both relieve Local Authorities of certain responsibilities and

liabilities, and throw the main financial cost on the State. The Beveridge division of functions is simple. It is that cash payments should be made by the State, and the provision of "Institutions and the care associated with them" by the Local Authorities. The Tomlinson proposals cut across that simple division of responsibility by advocating that the direction of training centres and employment centres should be undertaken by the Ministry of Labour and National Service.

The measure of relief given by each set of proposals to the complicated functions of Local Authorities would leave the responsibility for the general welfare of the blind in their hands; but, as a result of the Beveridge policy all blind persons would have an independent income, i.e. one derived from sources other than local rates, and, as a result of the Tomlinson policy, judgment on trainability and employability and the provision of training and employment (other than training for sheltered employment) would lie in other hands. The general effect of the changes would in our view be beneficial. Administration would be more logical, and blind persons of all ages and grades would be put on a more natural footing with other members of the community.

17. Comprehensiveness of Social Security

Under the Social Security Plan the community is divided into six classes:

- (a) Employees;
- (b) Others gainfully occupied, as employers, traders, etc.;
- (c) Housewives;
- (d) Others of working age not gainfully occupied;
- (e) Persons below working age;
- (f) Persons retired on reaching 60 or 65.

Most blind persons of classes (a) and (b) would be contributors in the years between the age of 16 and the onset of blindness, and would consequently be entitled to a series of consecutive benefits, offering certain alternatives. Unemployment Benefit would be a weekly payment, without means test, throughout working age, subject to the condition that, after a certain period, the insured blind person, to continue to qualify, would be required to attend a work or training centre. Disability Benefit would be a weekly payment throughout working age to blind persons physically incapacitated from work from any cause, until replaced by Industrial Pension; it would apply to classes (a) and (b), with the condition that in class (b) it would be paid only for prolonged disability, i.e. after thirteen weeks. Disability due to industrial accident or disease is covered by the Plan, the present Workmen's Compensation Act being superseded. Total disablement will be

met by Industrial Pension, the amount being not a uniform sum, but based on a percentage of earnings when employed. Partial disablement arising from employment would be met by partial pension.

The Social Security Act, when it is drafted, will have to be most carefully scrutinized to see that none of the circumstances attending loss of sight are left uncovered, but so far as persons who receive training or secure employment are concerned the range of the Plan appears to be comprehensive. It seems to cover every vicissitude in the lives of blind persons who are, for any appreciable part of their lives, normally employed or otherwise gainfully occupied.

There is, on the other hand, obvious need to reconcile the Beveridge proposals on training with the Tomlinson proposals. The normal period of unconditional Unemployment Benefit would be six months, at the end of which time the unemployed person would be required to attend a work or training centre. The Tomlinson Report puts the onus of training blind persons on the Local Education Authority. The Beveridge Report provides for the payment, by the Ministry of Social Security, of Training Benefit—a payment for a limited period at Unemployment Benefit rates, without means test, but subject to conditions of training.

The reconciliation would be best effected on the lines suggested in paragraph 15 above, i.e. by putting the blind in the matter of training and employment on the same footing as other disabled persons, and providing that Training Benefit should be available for trainees either in Education Authority or the Ministry of Labour and National Service centres.

Apart from the training condition, it should be noted in its bearing on the circumstances attendant on blindness, that recipients of Unemployment Benefit will not be allowed to hold out indefinitely for work of the type to which they are accustomed, or to refuse work because it involves a change of residence. (A removal and lodgings grant is to be made available for persons taking work or training away from home.)

18. Augmentation of Wages

The Tomlinson Report, as has been pointed out in Section 13 above, makes no provision for augmentation of wages. The Beveridge Report has accepted, however, the argument, put to it in Mr Eagar's Memorandum,¹ that blindness should not be treated on the assumption that it involves total loss of earning power; that it may, however, involve partial incapacity for earning, and that in all cases there is a specific "expense of blindness." It provides for a "partial incapacity allowance additional to Disability Benefit for special expenses." The

¹ *Blind Welfare and Social Security*, published in *The New Beacon* (June 15, 1942).

recognition that a blind worker needs a somewhat higher level of maintenance than other workers, and in addition may suffer from partial incapacity for earning is greatly to be welcomed, and, worked out in its detailed application, this Partial Incapacity allowance should take the place of Augmentation of Wages to workers employed in open or sheltered industry. Moreover, this allowance would be payable to blind persons employed on their own account, with the consequence of stimulating their initiative and enlarging their opportunities.

19. The 'Unemployable' Blind

One effect of Social Security will be to end, for administrative purposes, the division of the blind into categories of trainable, employable, unemployable, etc. The term 'unemployable' is in fact a bad one; it lumps together defectives and old-age pensioners, to say nothing of physically and temperamentally competent men and women who, losing their sight in early adult life, are deemed to be not worth training for one of the limited number of trades practised in sheltered workshops. It will be an advantage to get rid of this ambiguous, and in some cases, derogatory term, the most pungent comment on which is that hundreds of 'Unemployable' Blind Persons are now engaged in wartime industries, earning good wages and a gratifyingly high reputation as workers.

Under Social Security a number of blind people who under present arrangements would be classed as Unemployable, will be insurable and be eligible for the insurance Benefits set out in Section 17 above. The residue will consist of:

1. Persons who have never been trained, or worked.
2. Persons who have had some training or employment, but have not paid a sufficient number of contributions to qualify for benefit.
3. Persons who have been gainfully occupied, etc., but claimed exemption from contributions on the ground of insufficient total income.
4. Unemployed persons who have been disqualified for Benefit because they have refused offers of training or employment.
5. Persons in need through causes not suitable for insurance, e.g. some form of desertion or separation.

Blind persons in the above classes, being uninsured, will, under the Beveridge Plan, be eligible for National Assistance. The present 'Unemployable' category will be broken up into more accurately defined classes, in two main divisions of Insured and Non-insured. Better definition is a means towards the end of more appropriate provision for needs, and is much to be welcomed. It may be as well to add, however, that we are here considering administration not information,

and that in compiling statistics of the blind after Social Security has been established, there will still be need for the categories trainable, employed, unemployed, etc. Knowledge of the economic status of the blind at any given date is an essential basis of progressive policy in blind welfare, and those who work for the blind will, whatever improvements are made in the social system, have to continue to watch constructively and critically over their interests.

20. National Assistance

National Assistance will supersede Public Assistance, Domiciliary Assistance, and Unemployment Assistance for all uninsured blind persons. The amount provided will meet needs up to subsistence level, but "it must be felt to be something less desirable than Insurance Benefit, otherwise the insured persons get nothing for their contributions." It will therefore be subject to means test and to certain "behaviour conditions."

There is a strong case for urging that the extra "expense of blindness" should be recognized by an adaptation of the Partial Incapacity allowance to the needs of unemployable blind persons. Any Means Test should require that the continuance of local responsibility for the care of the blind, to be embodied in schemes agreed on by the Ministry of Social Security and Local Authorities, should provide, on a case work basis, for all the needs of the unemployable blind which may not be adequately met by National Assistance. It is obviously of great importance that, in the Social Security Order, Local Agencies, official and voluntary, should be vigorous, and should be able to command adequate resources and to enlist public sympathy and support. The blind have benefited greatly in the last twenty-three years by the flying start given them in the flight from the Poor Law. As was written in "The New Beacon" of April, 1942:

"The differentiation then established" (i.e. 1920) "between the blind and other handicapped persons has never been substantially justified. . . . If the Poor Law was, and if Public Assistance is inadequate or unsuitable for the blind, it is for the same reasons, though perhaps in a different degree, inadequate or unsuitable for . . . other groups of handicapped citizens. The blind are in a sense a privileged group, but only in the sense that certain things have been done for them that might well be done for others."

This does not mean that the blind should be prepared to accept lower standards, nor is there any proposal in the Beveridge Report which implies that they would be required to do so. They have much to gain from the foreshadowed reorganization of arrangements for the employment of the handicapped, and, if their case for special considera-

tion in certain details is properly made, they should gain rather than lose by their inclusion in the Social Security scheme. It will be particularly important, however, during the transition stage from the present complex system to the greater simplicity of Social Security that Domiciliary Assistance should not be withdrawn until National Assistance is ready to take its place.

21. The Blind in the New Order

It would be a waste of time to discuss here the actual rates of Benefits, Allowances, or Pensions, which the blind would secure under the Social Security plan. Sir William Beveridge set out certain figures on certain assumptions. These figures are of great value as illustrations of the principles involved. But no one at present knows whether the assumptions will be fulfilled, and no one at present knows how generous the country will want or be able to be in the years that follow the War. Though the financial details will ultimately be of crucial importance they cannot be settled now. We are concerned at this stage in the general structure of Social Welfare in which the existing system of Blind Welfare seems likely to be embodied. A purely self-regarding agitation on behalf of the blind would defeat its own ends. On the other hand, Blind Welfare involves many particular considerations, and those who are engaged in it must present their case intelligibly and forcibly, watching all developments and bringing influence to bear at the right point.

The first line of action must be to safeguard the interests of the blind during the transitional period. On that there can be no hesitation or controversy. The ultimate major issues of policy are first the inclusion of the employment services of the blind in the Resettlement Scheme and secondly their inclusion in the Social Security scheme. Both involve a measure of delocalization, in one case of an industrial function, in the other of a cost hitherto borne on the rates. A decision to accept the main principles of both schemes would not be absolute and unconditional. It would be accompanied by determination to press on Parliament the need for specific supplementation of income to meet the expense of blindness on behalf of both the employed and unemployable blind, and the importance of ensuring that the Ministry of Social Security's arrangements with local authorities for continued personal welfare should allow for grants and gifts to meet hardships and shortages outside the scope of social insurance. Subject to these considerations we conclude that skilful combination of the Tomlinson and Beveridge proposals will bring within reach a plan which is comprehensive and at the same time specific in its several parts for the welfare of the blind, considered not only as recipients of public bounty but as contributive citizens.

22. Acknowledgments

In concluding this Report we desire to record our thanks to the Secretary-General of the National Institute, Mr W. McG. Eagar, who set out the problems for our consideration and has written this report on our behalf; he particularly desires us to mention the valuable assistance given him in this task by Mr John Wilson, an Assistant Secretary of the National Institute.

We wish to record also our appreciation of the courtesy of Mr R. E. Gomme and other officials of the Ministry of Labour and National Service in elucidating points on which we were in doubt and discussing the bearing of the Tomlinson Committee's Report on the problem with which we are particularly concerned.

Finally we would not end this Report without expressing to Sir William Beveridge and Mr George Tomlinson the sense of obligation we feel to them for the immensely important contribution they have made towards a worthy solution of the problems of blindness in our national life.

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